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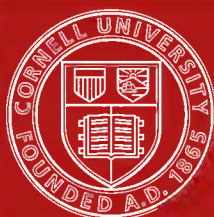
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David Copperfield, a reading, in five cha



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DAVID COPPERFIELD:
A READING.

*Two hundred and seventy-five copies of this book
have been printed, of which two hundred and fifty
only are for sale.*



MRS. WINTER.

Formerly MISS MARIA SARAH BEADNELL ;
the betrothed of CHARLES DICKENS, 1830-33 ;
the DORA *of* David Copperfield, and the
FLORA *of* Little Dorrit.

DAVID COPPERFIELD

A Reading, in Five Chapters,

BY

CHARLES DICKENS

Reprinted from the privately printed edition of 1866

WITH A NOTE ON THE ROMANTIC HISTORY OF
CHARLES DICKENS AND MARIA BEADNELL

BY

JOHN HARRISON STONEHOUSE

Author of

*'Charles Dickens and Maria Beadnell' (the Dora
of 'David Copperfield'), privately printed by the
Bibliophile Society, Boston, Massachusetts.*

LONDON

HENRY SOTHERAN & CO.

43, PICCADILLY, W. 1, AND 140, STRAND, W.C. 2

1921

LONDON :
PRINTED BY STRANGEWAYS AND SONS,
TOWER STREET,
CAMBRIDGE CIRCUS, W.C. 2.

INTRODUCTION.

A NOTE ON THE ROMANTIC HISTORY OF CHARLES DICKENS AND MARIA BEADNELL (*the DORA of 'DAVID COPPER- FIELD'*).

'Among the mighty store of wonderful chains that are for ever forging day and night in the vast iron-works of time and circumstance, there was one chain forged in the moment of that small conclusion, riveted to the foundations of heaven and earth, and gifted with invincible force to hold and drag.'—EDWIN DROOD.

THE present reprint of the Reading Edition of *David Copperfield* seems a fitting occasion on which to refer to those events in the early life of Charles Dickens on which he founded the story of David Copperfield and his child-wife Dora, and to place on record a brief and authentic account of the documentary evidence relating to the subject, which consists of letters written by Dickens himself to Mrs. Winter, the lady who had been the original of Dora Spenlow. These letters came direct from Mrs. Winter's only surviving daughter. They are printed *in extenso* in the volume published by the Bibliophile Society of Boston, Massachusetts, in 1908.*

* *Charles Dickens and Maria Beadnell ('Dora').*—Private Correspondence between Charles Dickens and Mrs. Henry Winter (*née* Maria Beadnell), the original of Dora Spenlow in *David Copperfield* and Flora Finching in *Little Dorrit*.

The story takes us back to London before railway days in 1829, when it was still by no means an unusual thing for principals to live over their business premises. At this time there were living in rooms over the well-known Bank of Messrs. Smith, Payne, & Smiths' at numbers 1 & 2, Lombard Street, two brothers, John and George Beadnell, the former being the Bank manager; the latter, who had started life as an architect, also employed there, and succeeding his brother in the management later on. George Beadnell was married and had three daughters, Margaret (afterwards Mrs. David Lloyd), Anne (afterwards Mrs. Henry Kolle), and Maria Sarah, the youngest, the original of Dora, who afterwards married Henry Louis Winter; both David Lloyd and Henry Kolle were friends of Dickens, and the prospect of the three young men marrying the three sisters was no doubt an agreeable one for them all to contemplate. Kolle was responsible for introducing Dickens to the Beadnell family in May, 1830, when Dickens fell in love with Maria at first sight, as related in *David Copperfield*. He there says, 'All was over in a moment. I had fulfilled my destiny. I was a captive and a slave. I loved Dora Spenlow to distraction.'

He was then eighteen years old, and had up to November, 1828, been employed as a junior clerk in the office of Mr. Edward Blackmore, at No. 1, Raymond Buildings, at a salary of but fifteen shillings a week. Recognising the fact that this work held little opportunity of advancement in life, he determined to follow the example of his father, who had recently become a Parliamentary reporter for a newspaper,

and with that end in view applied himself to the study of shorthand, and with his characteristic energy 'tamed that savage stenographic mystery'* so thoroughly that Mr. Beard, the first friend he made when he entered the Gallery, was able to testify that 'there never *was* such a shorthand writer.'† He soon succeeded in getting employment in one of the offices in Doctors' Commons, the home of the deplorable Ecclesiastical Courts of the time, as well as the mart for marriage licences, and in 1831 established himself in an office of his own at No. 5, Bell Yard, Doctors' Commons. In the year following he entered the Reporters' Gallery at the House of Commons, and it was towards the end of this period, just when his worldly prospects were greatly improving, and his engagement to Maria Beadnell was terminating (as he told the lady twenty-three years later) that he often came from the House of Commons in the early hours of the morning, to wander past the house she was asleep in.

The letters referred to consist of two series. The first contains five letters in Dickens's handwriting, and one copy in Maria Beadnell's, all addressed from No. 18, Bentinck Street, and undated, but from interior evidence written in the spring of 1833. In this series Dickens appears in the character of a rejected lover of Maria Beadnell, after a more or less recognised courtship of between three and four years; he pleads eloquently, but with dignity and obvious restraint, for a reconsideration of the position, and shows at the same time something of the capricious

* *David Copperfield*, chapter xliii.

† Forster's *Life of Dickens*, chapter iii.

nature of his *inamorata*; and in returning her love-letters and tokens of affection with the first of the letters he tells her that nothing would afford him more pleasure than to hear of the happiness of her who was his first and last love; and that as for himself he was destitute of hope or comfort. In the last of this series Dickens makes a final but futile appeal to Maria Beadnell's better nature.

If any answer to this was received at all by Dickens it was an unfavourable one, for the correspondence ceased, and no communication whatever passed between the one-time lovers, nor did they meet again for over twenty years. How completely Dickens broke away from the circle of friends that he had shared with Maria Beadnell is shown by a long autobiographical poem written by him in the early part of his courtship of her, which is also published in the Bibliophile volume: it is in the form of a parody on Goldsmith's poem 'Retaliation.' In this Dickens describes by name and personal characteristics the various members of the party of friends with whom he was intimate at the home of the Beadnells; in the first part he compares each of them as they sit at table to an article of food; the Misses Beadnell, Maria and her sister, 'are two nice little Ducks, and very well dressed'; while he is a young summer cabbage, wanting its heart, which he had lost to Maria somewhat over a year ago.

Starting again he writes, with fuller detail, an Epitaph for each of the guests; these epitaphs are remarkably interesting, as they furnish unmistakable clues for the identity of several of the personages in *Sketches by Boz*, *David Copperfield*, etc.; even Maria

Beadnell's dog 'Daphne' is not forgotten, nor the fact that 'he would eat mutton chops if you cut off the fat.'*

It is a significant fact that only one of the seventeen people whose personalities are so intimately described in the poem is mentioned by name in any Life of Dickens, or in any of his published letters—so completely did he cut himself off from all connexion with the Beadnell circle after the engagement was broken off; though he did not hesitate to embody many of the members of it in his books, while the recollection of his fruitless love for Maria remained an abiding influence with him far on in life. This is most plainly set out in the Second Series of these letters, the first of which is dated February 10th, 1855; during the interval of twenty-two years, as already stated, no communication whatever had passed between the one-time lovers.† Thirteen letters to Mrs. Winter of this later period are published in the Bibliophile volume, some of which may safely be said to be the finest that Dickens ever wrote, and are of priceless biographical value. In opening his heart unreservedly to his old lover he recapitulated the story of his youthful romance in considerable detail.

* 'And Jip must have a mutton-chop every day at twelve, or he'll die.'—*David Copperfield*, chapter xxxvii.

† 'In his youth he had ardently loved this woman, and had heaped upon her all the locked-up wealth of his affection and imagination. . . . Ever since that memorable time, though he had, until the night of his arrival, as completely dismissed her from any association with his Present or Future as if she had been dead (which she might easily have been for anything he knew), he had kept the old fancy of the Past, unchanged, in its old sacred place.'—*Little Dorrit*, chapter xiii.

It seems Mrs. Winter made the first advance towards reopening the correspondence, and told Dickens in her letter that she had called on him (though it never came to his knowledge at the time) at Devonshire Terrace in 1848, on the occasion of the death of his favourite sister Fanny, who had been a friend and confidant of the lovers in the old days in Lombard Street.

In his answer to this letter Dickens tells Mrs. Winter how he was reading at his fireside on the evening of February 18th, 1855, when her letter was handed to him with some others, but not recognising the writing of any private friend, he delayed opening them and returned to his book. The sight of the writing, however, had caused some curious mental disturbance, and set up in his mind a train of thought respecting his early life that he at last recognised as being due to this letter, and when on looking again at it he recognised Mrs. Winter's handwriting, he opened it 'with the touch of my young friend David Copperfield when he was in love.'

He goes on to say how well he remembers all the circumstances connected with those times, and towards the end of a long letter refers to the fact that he is going to Paris in the morning, and that their courtship had been interrupted by Maria herself having been sent there to finish her education, and he offers to discharge any commissions, or bring home anything for her children from Paris. A later letter shows that he bought some jewellery for Mrs. Winter and her children; and it is interesting now to know that with his remarkable faculty for reproducing his personal experiences in his writings he described

his interview with the jeweller in the pages of *Little Dorrit* shortly afterwards.

He begins his second letter, written from Paris four days later, by saying that he had half a mind to address Mrs. Winter by her Christian name, a suggestion apparently not unpleasing to the lady, as his next letter begins 'My dear Maria.' It refers to well-remembered incidents of the old days together, and his pleasure in having a share in her gentler remembrances, and begs her to tell her children when they grow up that he loved their mother very dearly when he was a boy.

He goes on to tell her that whatever of romance, energy, passion, aspiration and determination belong to him, was due entirely to her influence, and that his early struggles with poverty and obscurity were brightened by one perpetual idea of her, and he suggests that she might have seen a faithful reflexion of his own passion in that of David Copperfield, and in the character of Dora something of her own self, and a grace that might possibly be reproduced in her own children in years to come.

The next letter, dated February 22nd, shows that Mrs. Winter in her answer to the previous one had given some explanations as to the reasons which led to the young lovers' quarrel, which Dickens tells her he read with great emotion, and adds that if she had only explained the matter so lucidly then, he was certain that 'the simple truth and energy which were in my love would have overcome everything.'*

* Compare: 'I hope that real love and truth are stronger in the end than any evil or misfortune in the world.'—*David Copperfield*, chapter xxxv. 'But in all reverses, whether for

Later in this letter he refers to the fact that just before writing *David Copperfield* he had started to write his autobiography, but that when he came to the period of their final quarrel he was unable to continue the story and burned the rest. Here we have for the first time the real explanation of Dickens's hesitancy between writing his autobiography, modelled, as I have recently been able to point out, on that of Thomas Holcroft, and composing his great autobiographical novel.

In his letter of February 10th, Dickens suggested that his wife should call on Mrs. Winter and arrange a day for herself and Mr. Winter to dine at Tavistock House. Exactly when and where this meeting of the one-time lovers took place there is no evidence to show—but, alas! for the mutability of human ideals, the rest of the letters prove that Dickens was completely disillusioned when instead of the Dora of his youth, he found that ‘Flora, always tall,* had grown to be very broad too, and short of breath; but that was not much. Flora, whom he had left a lily, had become a peony; but that was not much. Flora, who had seemed enchanting in all she said and thought, was diffuse and silly. That was much. Flora, who had been spoiled and artless long ago, was determined to be spoiled and artless now. That was a fatal blow.’† In fact, ‘The star of his own life from boyhood had become, in a moment, putrid vapour.’‡ good or evil, the words of Mr. Edson to the fair young partner of his life were, ‘Unchanging Love and Truth will carry us through all.’—*Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy*.

* Maria Beadnell was decidedly *petite*, and was known amongst her friends in middle life as ‘the pocket Venus.’

† *Little Dorrit*, chapter xiii. ‡ *Martin Chuzzlewit*, chapter vi.

The rest of the letters after this become more or less formal in tone, and their chief importance lies in the interest which Dickens showed in the welfare of Mrs. Winter's two children, one of whom died in June, 1855. His very beautiful letter of condolence on that occasion is published in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, with a brief note added by the Editors to the effect that 'Mrs. Winter [was] a very dear friend and companion of Charles Dickens in his youth.'

It was this feeling of sympathy towards the children of his old lover that prompted Dickens to write, 'No man ever really loved a woman, lost her, and knew her with a blameless though an unchanged mind when she was a wife and a mother, but her children had a strange sympathy with him—an instinctive delicacy of pity for him. What fine hidden sensibilities are touched in such a case, no echoes tell; but it is so, and it was so here. Carton was the first stranger to whom little Lucie held out her chubby arms, and kept his place with her as she grew.'*

'And there is one slight creature, Tom—her child; not Ruth's—whom thine eyes follow in the romp and dance: who, wondering sometimes to see thee look so thoughtful, runs to climb up on thy knee, and put her cheek to thine: who loves thee, Tom, above all the rest, if that can be: and falling sick once, chose thee for her nurse, and never knew impatience, Tom, when Thou wert by her side.'†

The same idea is beautifully elaborated in the

* *Tale of Two Cities*, book ii., chapter xxi.

† *Martin Chuzzlewit*, book ii., chapter xxix.

story of Beatrice Tresham and her child Polly, in *Mugby Junction*, referred to below in connexion with Lombard Street.

Mrs. Winter died at Southsea on September 20th, 1886, her husband having predeceased her in 1871 ; her daughter, from whom the above-mentioned letters were procured, died about three years ago.

CHARLES DICKENS AND THE LOMBARD STREETS.

The name of Lombard Street is generally taken as a synonym for banking, and the only suggestion of romance that it conveys is that of money-making ; but the knowledge that we now possess that Charles Dickens, when a young man of seventeen to twenty-one, was desperately in love with a girl residing there, will for ever invest the historic home of England's bankers with an interest undreamt of by Walter Bagehot, and has enriched the annals of the Money Market with the memory of his boyish dreams, and the wonderful story of a passion which was the inspiration of his early genius, and has provided us, in *David Copperfield*, with one of the most beautiful prose idylls in the English language.

Lombard Street is mentioned several times by Dickens. Little Frank, in *Poor Relations*, was 'very fond of it,' but the most familiar references to its neighbourhood occur in connexion with the 'George

ERRATUM.

Page xiv., *line* 2.—Delete the words ‘referred to below
in connexion with Lombard Street.’

and Vulture' Tavern and Hotel, George Yard, a house very well known to Dickens during the period of his courtship of Maria Beadnell. He made good use of this knowledge when writing *Pickwick* three years later, where he chose it as the favourite London resort of Mr. Pickwick after he left Mrs. Bardell's lodgings. It was also to the 'George and Vulture' that 'Samivel' and his father, Tony Weller, repaired after the latter had cashed his cheque for £530., the balance of the second Mrs. Weller's funded savings, at the famous bank of Smith, Payne, and Smith's.

There was however in Dickens's life a *second* Lombard Street which has no place in his writings, and forms the very antithesis to 'the golden Street of the Lombards.'* It was but five years before his introduction to the Beadnell circle, while he was working as 'a little labouring hind'† in Warren's Blacking Factory at Hungerford Stairs, that he was, at his own urgent request, removed from his lonely and meagre lodging in Little College Street, Camden Town, to a back-attic in Lant Street in the Borough (the subsequent home of Mr. Bob Sawyer), which he 'thought was a Paradise,'‡ chiefly because it enabled him to breakfast 'at home,' i.e. with the rest of the family in the Marshalsea, where his father was then imprisoned for debt. One of the mean streets running immediately out of Lant Street is a thoroughfare honoured with the proud name of Lombard Street;§

* *Little Dorrit*, vol. ii., chapter xvi.

† *David Copperfield*, chapter xi.

‡ Forster's *Life of Dickens*, vol. i., chapter ii.

§ 'Lombard Street, Southwark, between Lant Street and Queen Street; originally a cant name for a street in the *Mint*,

as this was seen and passed by Dickens daily, during that dreadful time when ‘he walked in darkness under the lamps of Holborn, and was crucified at Charing Cross,’* we can well imagine what a poignant contrast the two streets and all that they stood for would take in his sensitive mind when he had reached those happier days in the City.

JOHN HARRISON STONEHOUSE.

*Muswell Hill,
August, 1921.*

in Southwark, a place formerly inhabited by fraudulent debtors.’ —*Hatton*, p. 48; *Strype*, book iv., p. 31; Wheatley and Cunningham’s *London*, vol. ii., p. 418.

* Chesterton’s *Charles Dickens*, chapter iii.

DAVID COPPERFIELD.

A Reading.

IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

PRIVATELY PRINTED

LONDON: PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET.

DAVID COPPERFIELD.

IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

I HAD known Mr. Peggotty's house very well in my childhood, and if it had been Aladdin's palace, roc's egg and all, I could not have been more charmed with it. It was an old black barge or boat, high and dry on Yarmouth Sands, with an iron funnel sticking out of it for a chimney, and smoking cosily. There was a delightful door cut in the side, and it was roofed in, and there were little windows in it. It was beautifully clean and as tidy as possible. There were some lockers and boxes, and there was a table, and there was a Dutch clock, and there was a chest of drawers, and there was a tea-tray with a painting on it, representing a lady with a parasol taking a walk

with a military-looking child who was trundling a hoop. The tray was kept from tumbling down, by a Bible; and the tray, if it *had* tumbled down, would have smashed a quantity of cups and saucers and a teapot that were grouped around the book. On the walls there were coloured pictures of Abraham in red going to sacrifice Isaac in blue; and of Daniel in yellow being cast into a den of green lions. Over the little mantelshelf was a picture of the 'Sarah Jane' lugger built at Sunderland, with a real little wooden stern stuck on to it—a work of art combining composition with carpentry, which I had regarded as one of the most enviable possessions the world could afford. Mr. Peggotty, as honest a seafaring man as ever breathed, dealt in lobsters, crabs, and crawfish; and a heap of those creatures, in a state of wonderful conglomeration with one another and never leaving off pinching whatever they laid hold of, were usually to be found in a little wooden out-house where the pots and kettles were kept.

As in my childhood, so in these days when I

was a young man, Mr. Peggotty's household consisted of his orphan nephew Ham Peggotty; his adopted niece Little Emily, once my small sweetheart, now a beautiful young woman, on the eve of being married to Ham; and Mrs. Gummidge. All three had been maintained at Mr. Peggotty's sole charge for years and years; and Mrs. Gummidge was the widow of his partner in a boat, who had died poor. She was very grateful no doubt, but she would have been more agreeable company in a small habitation if she had hit upon any other acknowledgment of the hospitality she received than constantly complaining, as she sat in the most comfortable corner by the fireside, that she was "a lone lorn creetur and everythink went contrairy with her."

It was a dark evening, and rain was beginning to fall, when I came within sight of Mr. Peggotty's house, and of a light within it shining through the window. A little floundering across the sand, which was heavy, brought me to the door, and I went in.

It looked very comfortable, indeed. Mr. Peggotty had smoked his evening pipe, and there were preparations for some supper by-and-by. The fire was bright, the ashes were thrown up, the locker was ready for little Emily in her old place. In her own old place sat my dear old nurse, Mr. Peggotty's sister, looking as if she had never left it. Mrs. Gummidge appeared to be fretting a little, in her own corner; and consequently looked quite natural, too.

"You're first of the lot, Mas'r Davy!" said Mr. Peggotty, with a happy face. "Doen't keep in that coat, sir, if it's wet."

"Thank you, Mr. Peggotty. It's quite dry."

"So 't is!" said Mr. Peggotty, feeling my shoulders. "As a chip! Sit ye down, sir. It ain't o' no use saying welcome to you, but you're welcome, kind and hearty."

"Thank you, Mr. Peggotty, I am sure of that. Well, dear old nurse," said I, giving her a kiss. "And how are you, old woman?"

Here Mrs. Gummidge groaned.

"Cheer up, my pretty mawther!" said Mr. Peggotty.

"No, no, Dan'l," returned Mrs. Gummidge. "Nothink's nat'ral to me but to be lone and lorn."

After looking at Mrs. Gummidge for some moments, in sore distress of mind, Mr. Peggotty glanced at the Dutch clock, rose, snuffed the candle, and put it in the window.

"Theer!" said Mr. Peggotty, cheerily. "Theer we are, Missis Gummidge!" Mrs. Gummidge slightly groaned again. "Lighted up, accordin' to custom! You're a wonderin' what's that's fur, sir! Well, it's fur our little Em'ly. You see, the path ain't over light or cheerful arter dark; and when I'm here at the hour as she's a comin' home from her needlework down-town, I puts the light in the winder. That, you see, meets two objects. She says, says Em'ly, 'Theer's home!' she says. And likeways, says Em'ly, 'My uncle's theer!' Fur if I ain't theer, I never have no light showed."

"You're a baby!" said his sister; very fond of him for it, if she thought so.

"Well," returned Mr. Peggotty, standing with his legs pretty wide apart, and rubbing his hands up and down them in his comfortable satisfaction, as he looked alternately at us and at the fire, "I doesn't know but what I am. Not, you see, to look at, but to—to consider on, you know. I doesn't care, bless you! Now I tell you. When I go a looking and looking about that theer pritty house of our Em'ly's, all got ready for her to be married, almost immediate, to that there blessed Tarpaulin, our Ham, I'm—I'm Gormed—theer! I can't say no fairer—if I doesn't feel as if the littlest things was her, a'most. I takes 'em up, and I puts 'em down, and I touches of 'em as delicate as if they was our Em'ly. So 't is with her little bonnets and that. I couldn't see one on 'em rough used a purpose—not fur the whole wureld. There's a babby fur you, in the form of a great Sea Porkypine!"

Mr. Peggotty relieved his earnestness with a roar of laughter. My old nurse and I both laughed, but not so loud.

“It’s my opinion, you see,” said Mr. Peggotty, with a delighted face, after some further rubbing of his legs, “as this is along of my havin’ played with Em’ly so much when she was a child, and havin’ made believe as we was Turks, and French, and sharks, and every wariety of forinners—bless you, yes; and lions and whales, and I don’t know what all!—when she warn’t no higher than my knee. I’ve got into the way on it, you know. Why, this here candle, now! *I* know wery well that arter she’s married and gone, I shall put that candle theer, just the same as now. I know wery well that when I’m here o’nights (and where else should *I* live, bless your arts, whatever fortun’ I come into!) and she ain’t here, or I ain’t theer, I shall put the candle in the winder, and sit afore the fire, pretending I’m expecting of her, like as I’m a doing now. If I don’t believe it I’m a shell-fish—biled too, and I can’t say fairer than that. *There’s* a babby for you, in the form of a Sea Porkypine! Why, at the present minute, when I see the candle sparkle up, I says to myself,

‘She’s a looking at it! Em’ly’s a coming!’ *There’s* a babby for you, in the form of a Sea Porkypine! Right for all that,” said Mr. Peggotty, stopping in his roar, and smiting his hands together; “fur here she is ”

No; it was only Ham. The night should have turned more wet since I came in, for he had a large sou’wester hat on, slouched over his face.

“Where’s Em’ly?” said Mr. Peggotty.

Ham made a motion with his head, as if she were outside. Mr. Peggotty took the light from the window, trimmed it, put it on the table, and was busily stirring the fire, when Ham, who had not moved, said:

“Mas’r Davy, will you come out a minute, and see what Em’ly and me has got to show you?”

We went out. As I passed him at the door, I saw, to my astonishment and fright, that he was deadly pale. He pushed me hastily into the open air, and closed the door upon us. Only upon us two.

“Ham! What’s the matter?”

“Mas’r Davy!—” Oh, for his broken heart, how dreadfully he wept!

I was paralyzed by the sight of such grief. I don’t know what I thought, or what I dreaded. I could only look at him.

“Ham! Poor good fellow! For Heaven’s sake tell me what’s the matter!”

“My love, Mas’r Davy—the pride and hope of my art—her that I’d have died for, and would die for now—she’s gone!”

“Gone?”

“Em’ly’s run away! Oh, Mas’r Davy, think *how* she’s run away, when I pray my good and gracious God to kill her (her that is so dear above all things) sooner than let her come to ruin and disgrace!”

The face he turned up to the troubled sky, the quivering of his clasped hands, the agony of his figure, remain associated with that lonely waste in my remembrance, to this hour.

“You’re a scholar, and know what’s right and best. What am I to say, in-doors? How am I ever to break it to him, Mas’r Davy?”

I saw the door move, and instinctively tried to hold the latch on the outside, to gain a moment's time. It was too late. Mr. Peggotty thrust forth his face: and never could I forget the change that came upon it when he saw us, if I were to live five hundred years.

I remember a great wail and cry, and the women hanging about him, and we all standing in the room; I with a paper in my hand, which Ham had given me; Mr. Peggotty, with his vest torn open, his hair wild, his face and lips quite white, and blood trickling down his bosom (it had sprung from his mouth, I think), looking fixedly at me.

"Read it, sir; slow, please. I doesn't know as I can understand."

In the midst of the silence of death, I read thus, from the blotted letter Ham had given me. In Emily's hand—

"'When you, who love me so much better than I ever have deserved, even when my mind was innocent, see this, I shall be far away.'"

“I shall be fur away,” he repeated slowly.
“Stop ! Em’ly fur away. Well !”

“ ‘ When I leave my dear home—my dear home
—oh, my dear home!—in the morning,’ ”
—the letter bore date on the previous night :

“ ‘—It will be never to come back, unless he
brings me back a lady. This will be found at
night, many hours after, instead of me. Oh, if
you knew how my heart is torn. If even you,
that I have wronged so much, that never can
forgive me, could only know what I suffer ! I am
too wicked to write about myself. Oh, take com-
fort in thinking that I am so bad. Oh, for mercy’s
sake, tell uncle that I never loved him half so
dear as now. Oh, don’t remember how affection-
ate and kind you have all been to me—don’t
remember we were ever to be married—but try
to think as if I died when I was little, and was
buried somewhere. Pray Heaven that I am going
away from, have compassion on my uncle ! Tell
him that I never loved him half so dear. Be his
comfort. Love some good girl, that will be what I

was once to uncle, and that will be true to you, and worthy of you, and know no shame but me. God bless all! I'll pray for all, often, on my knees. If he don't bring me back a lady, and I don't pray for my own self, I'll pray for all. My parting love to uncle. My last tears, and my last thanks, for uncle! ' "

That was all.

He stood, long after I had ceased to read, still looking at me. At length I ventured to take his hand, and to entreat him, as well as I could, to endeavour to get some command of himself. He replied, " I thankee, sir, I thankee! " without moving.

Ham spoke to him. Mr. Peggotty was so far sensible of *his* affliction, that he wrung his hand; but, otherwise, he remained in the same state, and no one dared to disturb him.

Slowly, at last, he moved his eyes from my face, as if he were waking from a vision, and cast them round the room. Then he said, in a low voice :

" Who's the man ? I want to know his name."

Ham glanced at me, and suddenly I felt a shock.

"There's a man suspected ; who is it ? "

"Mas'r Davy ! " implored Ham. " Go out a bit, and let me tell him what I must. You doesn't ought to hear it, sir."

I felt the shock again. I sank down in a chair, and tried to utter some reply ; but my tongue was fettered, and my sight was weak. For I felt it was my friend—the friend I had unhappily introduced there—Steerforth, my old schoolfellow and my friend.

"I want to know his name ! "

"For some time past," Ham faltered, " there's been a servant about here, at odd times. There's been a gen'l'm'n too. Both of 'em belonged to one another."

Mr. Peggotty stood fixed as before, but now looking at him.

"The servant was seen along with—our poor girl—last night. He's been in hiding about here, this week or over. He was thought to have gone, but he was hiding. Doesn't stay, Mas'r Davy doesn't ! "

I could not have moved if the house had been about to fall upon me.

"A strange chay and horses was outside town, this morning, on the Norwich road, a'most afore the day broke. The servant went to it, and come from it, and went to it again. When he went to it again, Em'ly was nigh him. The t'other was inside, Mas'r Davy's frend. He's the man."

"For the Lord's love," said Mr. Peggotty, falling back, and putting out his hand, as if to keep off what he dreaded. "Doen't tell me his name's Steerforth!"

"Mas'r Davy," exclaimed Ham, in a broken voice, "it ain't no fault of yourn—and I am far from laying of it to you—but it is your friend Steerforth, and he's a damned villain!"

Mr. Peggotty uttered no cry, and shed no tear, and moved no more, until he seemed to wake again, all at once, and pulled down his rough coat from its peg in a corner.

"Bear a hand with this! I'm struck of a heap, and can't do it," he said, impatiently. "Bear

a hand, and help me. Well!" when somebody had done so. "Now give me that theer hat!"

Ham asked him whither he was going?

"I'm a going to seek my niece. I'm a going to seek my Em'ly. I'm a going, first, to stave in that theer boat as he gave me, and 'sink it where I would have drowned *him*, as I'm a livin' soul, if I had had one thought of what was in him! As he sat afore me, in that boat," he said, wildly, holding out his clenched right hand, "as he sat afore me, face to face, strike me down dead, but I'd have drowned him, and thought it right!—I'm a going fur to seek my niece."

"Where?" cried Ham, interposing himself before the door.

"Anywhere! I'm a going to seek my niece through the wureld I'm a going to find my poor niece in her shame, and bring her back wi' my comfort and forgiveness. No one stop me! I tell you I'm a going to seek my niece! I'm a going to seek her fur and wide!"

"No, no!" Mrs. Gummidge, came between them.

in a fit of crying. "No, no, Dan'l, not as you are now. Seek her in a little while, my lone lorn Dan'l, and that'll be but right; but not as you are now. Sit ye down, and give me your forgiveness for having ever been a worrit to you, Dan'l—what have *my* contrairies ever been to this!—and let us speak a word about them times when she was first a orphan, and when Ham was too, and when I was a poor widder woman, and you took me in. It'll soften your poor heart, Dan'l, and you'll bear your sorrow better; for you know the promise, Dan'l, 'As you have done it unto one of the least of these, you have done it unto me;' and that can never fail under this roof, that's been our shelter for so many, many year!"

He was quite passive now; and when I heard him crying, the impulse that had been upon me to go down upon my knees, and ask their pardon for the desolation I had innocently caused, and curse Steerforth, yielded to a better feeling. My overcharged heart found the same relief, and I cried too.

CHAPTER II.

AT this period of my life I lived in my top set of chambers in Buckingham Street, Strand, London, and was over head and ears in love with Dora. I lived principally on Dora and coffee. My appetite languished and I was glad of it, for I felt as though it would have been an act of perfidy towards Dora to have a natural relish for my dinner. I bought four sumptuous waistcoats—not for myself; *I* had no pride in them—for Dora. I took to wearing straw-coloured kid gloves in the streets. I laid the foundations of all the corns I have ever had. If the boots I wore at that period could only be produced and compared with the natural size of my feet, they would show in a most affecting manner what the state of my heart was.

Mrs. Crupp, the laundress of my chambers, must have been a woman of penetration ; for, when this attachment was but a few weeks old, she found it out. She came up to me one evening when I was very low, to ask (being afflicted with spasms) if I could oblige her with a little incture of cardamums, mixed with rhubarb and flavoured with seven drops of the essence of cloves—or, if I had not such a thing by me—with a little brandy. As I had never even heard of the first remedy, and always had the second in the closet, I gave Mrs. Crupp a glass of the second ; which (that I might have no suspicion of its being devoted to any improper use) she began to take immediately.

“Cheer up, sir,” said Mrs. Crupp. “Excuse me. I know what it is, sir. There’s a lady in the case.”

“Mrs. Crupp ? ”

“Oh, bless you ! Keep a good heart, sir ! Never say die, sir ! If she don’t smile upon you, there’s a many as will. You’re a young

gentleman to *be* smiled on, Mr. Copperfull, and you must learn your value, sir."

Mrs. Crupp always called me Mr. Copperfull: firstly, no doubt, because it was not my name; and secondly, I am inclined to think, in some indistinct association with a washing-day.

"What makes you suppose there is any young lady in the case, Mrs. Crupp?"

"Mr. Copperfull," said Mrs. Crupp, with a deal of feeling, "I'm a mother myself. You don't eat enough, sir, nor yet drink."

"Is that what you found your supposition on, Mrs. Crupp?"

"Sir, I've laundressed other young gentlemen besides yourself. A young gentleman may be over-careful of himself, or he may be under-careful of himself. He may brush his hair too regular, or too unregular. He may wear his boots much too large for him, or much too small. That is according as the young gentleman has his nat'ral character formed. But let him go to which extreme he may, sir, there's a young lady in both of 'em."

Mrs. Crupp shook her head in such a determined manner, that I had not an inch of 'vantage ground left.

"It was but the gentleman which died here before yourself," said Mrs. Crupp, "that fell in love—with a barmaid—and had his waistcoats took in directly, though much swelled by drinking."

"Mrs. Crupp," said I, "I must beg you not to connect the young lady in my case with a barmaid, or anything of that sort, if you please."

"Mr. Copperfull, I'm a mother myself, and not likely. I ask your pardon, sir, if I intrude. I should never wish to intrude where I were not welcome. But you are a young gentleman, Mr. Copperfull, and my advice to you is, to cheer up, sir, to keep a good heart, and to know your own value. If you was to take to something, sir; if you was to take to skittles, now, which is healthy, you might find it divert your mind, and do you good."

I turned it off and changed the subject by informing Mrs. Crupp that I wished to entertain

at dinner next day, my esteemed friend Traddles, and Mr. and Mrs. Micawber. And I took the liberty of suggesting a pair of soles, a small leg of mutton, and a pigeon pie. Mrs. Crupp broke out into rebellion on my first bashful hint in reference to her cooking the fish and joint, and terrified me by saying, "No! No, sir! You will not ask me such a thing, for you are better acquainted with me than to suppose me capable of doing what I cannot do with ampieal satisfaction to my own feelings!" But, in the end, a compromise was effected; and Mrs. Crupp consented to achieve this feat, on condition that I dined from home for a fortnight afterwards.

I bought a second-hand dumb-waiter for the dinner-party, in preference to re-engaging a handy young man who had waited on me before; against whom I had conceived a prejudice, in consequence of meeting him in the Strand, one Sunday morning, in a waistcoat remarkably like one of mine. A "young gal" whom I had previously employed on the motion of Mrs. Crupp

was re-engaged ; but on the stipulation that she should only bring in the dishes, and then withdraw to the landing-place, beyond the outer door ; where a habit of sniffing she had contracted would be lost upon the guests.

Having laid in the materials for a bowl of punch, to be compounded by Mr. Micawber ; having provided a bottle of lavender-water, two wax candles, a paper of mixed pins, and a pin-cushion, to assist Mrs. Micawber in her toilette, at my dressing-table ; having also caused the fire in my bed-room to be lighted for Mrs. Micawber's convenience ; and having laid the cloth with my own hands ; I awaited the result with composure.

At the appointed time, my three visitors arrived together. Mr. Micawber with more shirt-collar than usual, and a new ribbon to his eye-glass ; Mrs. Micawber with her cap in a whity-brown paper parcel ; Traddles carrying the parcel, and supporting Mrs. Micawber on his arm. They were all delighted with my residence.

When I conducted Mrs. Micawber to my dressing-table, and she saw the scale on which it was prepared for her, she was in such raptures, that she called Mr. Micawber to come in and look.

"My dear Copperfield," said Mr. Micawber, "this is luxurious. This is a way of life which reminds me of the period when I was myself in a state of celibacy. I am at present established on what may be designated as a small and unassuming scale; but, you are aware that I have, in the course of my career, surmounted difficulties, and conquered obstacles. You are no stranger to the fact, that there have been periods of my life, when it has been requisite that I should pause, until certain expected events should turn up— when it has been necessary that I should fall back, before making what I trust I shall not be accused of presumption in terming—a spring. The present is one of those momentous stages in the life of man. You find me, fallen back, for a spring, and I have every reason to believe that a vigorous leap will shortly be the result."

To divert his thoughts, I informed Mr. Micawber that I relied upon him for a bowl of punch, and led him to the lemons. I never saw a man so thoroughly enjoy himself amid the fragrance of lemon-peel and sugar, the odour of burning rum, and the steam of boiling water, as Mr. Micawber did that afternoon. It was wonderful to see his face shining at us out of a thin cloud of these delicate fumes, as he stirred, and mixed, and tasted, and looked as if he were making, not mere punch, but a fortune for his family down to the latest posterity. As to Mrs. Micawber, I don't know whether it was the effect of the cap, or the lavender-water, or the pins, or the fire, or the wax-candles, but she came out of my room, comparatively speaking, lovely. And the lark was never gayer than that excellent woman.

I suppose—I never ventured to inquire, but I suppose—that Mrs. Crupp, after frying the soles, was taken ill. Because we broke down at that point. The leg of mutton came up, very red within, and very pale without: besides having a

foreign substance of a gritty nature sprinkled over it, as if it had had a fall into ashes. But we were not in a condition to judge of this fact from the appearance of the gravy, forasmuch as the "young gal" had dropped it all upon the stairs. The pigeon-pie was not bad, but it was a delusive pie: the crust being like a disappointing head, phrenologically speaking: full of lumps and bumps, with nothing particular underneath. In short, the banquet was such a failure that I should have been quite unhappy—about the failure, I mean, for I was always unhappy about Dora—if I had not been relieved by the great good-humour of my company.

"My dear friend Copperfield," said Mr. Micawber, "accidents will occur in the best-regulated families; and in families not regulated by that pervading influence which sanctifies while it enhances the—a—I would say, in short, by the influence of Woman in the lofty character of Wife, they may be expected with confidence, and must be borne with philosophy. If you will allow

me to take the liberty of remarking that there are few comestibles better, in their way, than a Devil, and that I believe, with a little division of labour, we could accomplish a good one if the young person in attendance could produce a gridiron, I would put it to you, that this little misfortune may be easily repaired."

There was a gridiron in the pantry, on which my morning rasher of bacon was cooked. We had it out, in a twinkling. Traddles cut the mutton into slices; Mr. Micawber covered them with pepper, mustard, salt, and cayenne; I put them on the gridiron, turned them with a fork, and took them off, under Mr. Micawber's direction; and Mrs. Micawber heated, and continually stirred, some mushroom ketchup in a little saucepan. When we had slices enough done to begin upon, we fell-to, with our sleeves still tucked up at the wrists, more slices sputtering and blazing on the fire, and our attention divided between the mutton on our plates, and the mutton then preparing.

What with the novelty of this cookery, the excellence of it, the bustle of it, the frequent starting up to look after it, the frequent sitting down to dispose of it as the crisp slices came off the gridiron hot and hot, the being so busy, so flushed with the fire, so amused, and in the midst of such a tempting noise and savour, we reduced the leg of mutton to the bone. My own appetite came back miraculously. I am ashamed to record it, but I really believe I forgot Dora for a little while.

“Punch, my dear Copperfield,” said Mr. Micawber, tasting it as soon as dinner was done, “like time and tide, waits for no man. Ah! it is at the present moment in high flavour. My love, will you give me your opinion?”

Mrs. Micawber pronounced it excellent.

“Then I will drink,” said Mr. Micawber, “if my friend Copperfield will permit me to take that social liberty, to the days when my friend Copperfield and myself fought our way in the world side by side. I may say, of myself and Copperfield, in

words we have sung together before now—the words of the immortal exciseman nurtured beyond the Tweed—that

We twa hae run about the braes
And pu'd the gowans fine

—in a figurative point of view—on several occasions. I am not exactly aware what gowans may be, hy-the-by, but I have no doubt that Copperfield and myself would frequently have taken a pull at them, if it had been feasible. My dear, another glass ?”

Mrs. Micawber said it must be very little, but we couldn't allow that, so it was a glassful.

“As we are quite confidential here, Mr. Copperfield,” said Mrs. Micawber sipping her punch, “(Mr. Traddles being a part of our domesticity), I should much like to have your opinion on Mr. Micawber's prospects. I have consulted branches of my family on the course most expedient for Mr. Micawber to take, and it was, that he should immediately turn his attention to coals.”

“To what, ma'am ?”

“To coals. To the coal trade. Mr. Micawber was induced to think, on inquiry, that there might be an opening for a man of his talent in the Medway Coal Trade. Then, as Mr. Micawber very properly said, the first step to be taken clearly was, to go and *see* the Medway. Which we went and saw. I say ‘we,’ Mr. Copperfield; for I never will desert Mr. Micawber. I am a wife and mother, and I never will desert Mr. Micawber.”

Traddles and I murmured our admiration.

“That,” said Mrs. Micawber, “that, at least, is *my* view, my dear Mr. Copperfield and Mr. Traddles, of the obligation which I took upon myself when I repeated the irrevocable words “I Emma, take thee, Wilkins.” I read the service over with a flat-candle, on the previous night, and the conclusion I derived from it was that I never could or would desert Mr. Micawber.”

“My dear,” said Mr. Micawber, a little impatiently, “I am not conscious that you are expected to do anything of the sort.”

Traddles and I murmured our admiration and approbation of Mrs. Micawber.

“We went,” repeated Mrs. Micawber, “and saw the Medway. My opinion of the coal trade on that river, was, that it might require talent, but that it certainly requires capital. Talent, Mr. Micawber has; capital, Mr. Micawber has not. We saw, I think, the greater part of the Medway; and that was my individual conclusion. My family were then of opinion that Mr. Micawber should turn his attention to corn—on commission. But corn, as I have repeatedly said to Mr. Micawber, may be gentlemanly, but it is not remunerative. Commission to the extent of two and ninepence in a fortnight cannot, however limited our ideas, be considered remunerative.”

We were all agreed upon that.

“Then,” said Mrs. Micawber, who prided herself on taking a clear view of things, and keeping Mr. Micawber straight by her woman’s wisdom, when he might otherwise go a little crooked, “then I naturally look round the world, and say,

‘What is there in which a person of Mr. Micawber’s talent is likely to succeed?’ And I exclude doing anything on commission, because commission is not a certainty. What is best suited to a person of Mr. Micawber’s peculiar temperament is, I am convinced, a certainty.”

Traddles and I both expressed, by a feeling murmur, that this great discovery was no doubt true of Mr. Micawber, and that it did him infinite credit.

“I will not conceal from you, my dear Mr. Copperfield, that *I* have long felt the Brewing business to be particularly adapted to Mr. Micawber. Look at Barclay and Perkins! Look at Truman, Hanbury, and Buxton! It is on that extensive footing that Mr. Micawber, I know from my own knowledge of him, is calculated to shine; and the profits, I am told, are e-nor-mous! But if Mr. Micawber cannot get into those firms—which decline to answer his letters, even when he offers his services in an inferior capacity—what is the use of dwelling upon that idea? None. I may

have a conviction that Mr. Micawber's manners—"

"Hem! Really, my dear," interposed Mr. Micawber.

"My love, be silent. I may have a conviction, Mr. Copperfield, that Mr. Micawber's manners peculiarly qualify him for the Banking business. I may argue within myself, that if *I* had a deposit at a banking-house, the manners of Mr. Micawber, as representing that banking-house, would inspire confidence, and extend the connexion. But if the various banking-houses refuse to avail themselves of Mr. Micawber's abilities, or receive the offer of them with contumely, what is the use of dwelling upon *that* idea? None. As to originating a banking-business, I may know that there are members of my family who, if they chose to place their money in Mr. Micawber's hands, might found an establishment of that description. But if they do *not* choose to place their money in Mr. Micawber's hands—which they don't—what is the use of that? Again I contend that

we are no farther advanced than we were before."

I shook my head, and said, "Not a bit." Traddles also shook his head, and said, "Not a bit."

"What do I deduce from this?" Mrs. Micawber went on to say, still with the same air of putting a case lucidly. "What is the conclusion, my dear Mr. Copperfield, to which I am irresistibly brought? Am I wrong in saying, it is clear that we must live?"

I answered, "Not at all!" and Traddles answered, "Not at all!" and I found myself afterwards sagely adding, alone, that a person must either live or die.

"Just so," returned Mrs. Micawber. "It is precisely that. Now I am convinced, myself, and this I have pointed out to Mr. Micawber several times of late, that things cannot be expected to turn up of themselves. We must in a measure, assist to turn them up. I may be wrong, but I have formed that opinion."

Both Traddles and I applauded it highly.

"Very well," said Mrs. Micawber. "Then what do I recommend? Here is Mr. Micawber with a variety of qualifications—with great talent—"

"Really, my love."

"Pray, my dear, allow me to conclude. Here is Mr. Micawber, with a variety of qualifications, with great talent—I should say, with genius, but that may be the partiality of a wife—"

Traddles and I both murmured "No."

"And here is Mr. Micawber without any suitable position or employment. Where does that responsibility rest? Clearly on society. Then I would make a fact so disgraceful known, and boldly challenge society to set it right. It appears to me, my dear Mr. Copperfield, that what Mr. Micawber has to do is to throw down the gauntlet to society, and say, in effect, 'Show me who will take that up. Let the party immediately step forward.'"

I ventured to ask Mrs. Micawber how this was to be done.

"By advertising in all the papers. It appears to me, that what Mr. Micawber has to do, in justice to himself, in justice to his family, and I will even go so far as to say in justice to society, by which he has been hitherto overlooked, is to advertise in all the papers; to describe himself plainly as so and so, with such and such qualifications, and to put it thus: '*Now employ me, on remunerative terms, and address, post paid, to W. M., Post Office, Camden Town.*'"

"This idea of Mrs. Micawber's, my dear Copperfield," said Mr. Micawber, making his shirt-collar meet in front of his chin, and glancing at me sideways, "is, in fact, the Leap to which I alluded when I last had the pleasure of seeing you."

"Advertising is rather expensive," I remarked, dubiously.

"Exactly so!" said Mrs. Micawber, preserving the same logical air. "Quite true, my dear Mr. Copperfield! I have made the identical observation to Mr. Micawber: It is for that reason es-

pecially, that I think Mr. Micawber ought (as I have already said, in justice to himself, in justice to his family, and in justice to society) to raise a certain sum of money—on a bill.”

Mr. Micawber, leaning back in his chair, trifled with his eye-glass, and cast his eye up at the ceiling; but I thought him observant of Traddles, too, who was looking at the fire.

“If no member of my family,” said Mrs. Micawber, “is possessed of sufficient natural feeling to negotiate that bill—I believe there is a better business-term to express what I mean—”

Mr. Micawber, with his eyes still cast up at the ceiling, suggested “Discount.”

“To discount that bill, then, my opinion is, that Mr. Micawber should go into the City, should take that bill into the Money Market, and should dispose of it for what he can get. If the individuals in the Money Market oblige Mr. Micawber to sustain a great sacrifice, that is between themselves and their consciences. I view it, steadily, as an investment. I recommend Mr. Micawber

my dear Mr. Copperfield, to do the same; to regard it as an investment which is sure of return, and to make up his mind to *any* sacrifice."

I felt, but I am sure I don't know why, that this was highly self-denying and devoted in Mrs. Micawber, and I uttered a murmur to that effect. Traddles, who took his tone from me, did likewise, and really I felt that she was a noble woman—the sort of woman who might have been a Roman matron, and done all manner of troublesome heroic public actions.

In the fervour of this impression, I congratulated Mr. Micawber on the treasure he possessed. So did Traddles. Mr. Micawber extended his hand to each of us in succession, and then covered his face with his pocket-handkerchief, which I think had more snuff upon it than he was aware of. He then returned to the punch, in the highest state of exhilaration.

He was full of eloquence. He gave us to understand that in our children we lived again, and that, under the pressure of pecuniary difficulties,

any accession to their number was doubly welcome. He said that Mrs. Micawber had latterly had her doubts on this point, but that he had dispelled them, and reassured her. As to her family, they were totally unworthy of her, and their sentiments were utterly indifferent to him, and they might—I quote his own expression—go to the Devil.

Mr. Micawber then delivered a warm eulogy on Traddles. He said Traddles's was a character, to the steady virtues of which he (Mr. Micawber) could lay no claim, but which, he thanked Heaven, he could admire. He feelingly alluded to the young lady, unknown, whom Traddles had honoured with his affection, and who had reciprocated that affection by honouring and blessing Traddles with *her* affection. Mr. Micawber pledged her. So did I. Traddles thanked us both, by saying, with a simplicity and honesty I had sense enough to be quite charmed with, "I am very much obliged to you indeed. And I do assure you, she's the dearest girl!—"

Mr. Micawber took an early opportunity, after that, of hinting, with the utmost delicacy and ceremony, at the state of *my* affections. Nothing but the serious assurance of his friend Copperfield to the contrary, he observed, could deprive him of the impression that his friend Copperfield loved and was beloved. After feeling very hot and uncomfortable for some time, and after a good deal of blushing, stammering, and denying, I said, having my glass in my hand, "Well! I would give them D.!" which so excited Mr. Micawber, that he ran with a glass of punch into my bedroom, in order that Mrs. Micawber might drink D., who drank it with enthusiasm, crying from within, in a shrill voice, "Hear, Hear! My dear Mr. Copperfield, I am delighted. Hear!" and tapping at the wall, by way of applause.

Mrs. Micawber made tea for us in a most agreeable manner; and, whenever I went near her, in handing about the teacups and bread-and-butter, asked me, in a whisper, whether D. was fair, or dark, or whether she was short, or tall; or some-

thing of that kind ; which I think I liked. After tea, we discussed a variety of topics before the fire ; and Mrs. Micawber was good enough to sing us (in a small, thin, flat voice, which I remembered to have considered, when I first knew her, the very table-beer of acoustics) the favourite ballads of "The Dashing White Sergeant," and "Little Tafflin." For both of these songs Mrs. Micawber had been famous when she lived at home with her papa and mamma. Mr. Micawber told us, that when he heard her sing the first one, on the first occasion of his seeing her beneath the parental roof, she had attracted his attention in an extraordinary degree ; but that when it came to Little Tafflin, he had resolved to win that woman or perish in the attempt.

It was between ten and eleven o'clock when Mrs. Micawber rose to replace her cap in the parcel, and to put on her bonnet. Mr. Micawber took the opportunity of Traddles putting on his greatcoat, to slip a letter into my hand, with a whispered request that I would read it at my

leisure. I also took the opportunity of my holding a candle over the bannisters to light them down, when Mr. Micawber was going first, leading Mrs. Micawber, to detain Traddles for a moment on the top of the stairs.

"Traddles, Mr. Micawber don't mean any harm, poor fellow; but, if I were you, I wouldn't lend him anything."

"My dear Copperfield, I haven't got anything to lend."

"You have got a name, you know."

"Oh! You call *that* something to lend?"

"Certainly."

"Oh! Yes, to be sure! I am very much obliged to you, Copperfield, but—I am afraid I have lent him that already."

"For the bill that is to be a certain investment?"

"No. Not for that one. This is the first I have heard of that one. I have been thinking that he will most likely propose that one, on the way home. Mine's another."

"I hope there will be nothing wrong about it."

"I hope not," said Traddles. "I should think not, though, because he told me, only the other day, that it was provided for. That was Mr. Micawber's expression, 'Provided for.'"

Mr. Micawber looking up at this juncture to where we were standing, I had only time to repeat my caution. Traddles thanked me, and descended. But I was much afraid, when I observed the good-natured manner in which he went down with Mrs. Micawber's cap in his hand, that he would be carried into the Money Market, neck and heels.

I returned to my fireside, and read Mr. Micawber's letter. It was dated an hour and a half before dinner. I am not sure whether I have mentioned that, when Mr. Micawber was at any particularly desperate crisis, he used a sort of legal phraseology: which he seemed to think equivalent to winding up his affairs.

"Sir—for I dare not say my dear Copperfield,

"It is expedient that I should inform you that the undersigned is Crushed. Some flickering

efforts to spare you the premature knowledge of his calamitous position, you may observe in him this day ; but hope has sunk beneath the horizon, and the undersigned is Crushed.

“The present communication is penned within the personal range (I cannot call it the society) of an individual, in a state closely bordering on intoxication, employed by a broker. That individual is in legal possession of the premises, under a distress for rent. His inventory includes, not only the chattels and effects of every description belonging to the undersigned, as yearly tenant of this habitation, but also those appertaining to Mr. Thomas Traddles, lodger, a member of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple.

“If any drop of gloom were wanting in the overflowing cup, which is now ‘commended’ (in the language of an immortal Writer) to the lips of the undersigned, it would be found in the fact, that a friendly acceptance granted to the undersigned, by the before-mentioned Mr. Thomas Traddles, for the sum of £23 4s. 9½d. is over due,

and is NOT provided for. Also, in the fact, that the living responsibilities clinging to the undersigned, will, in the course of nature be increased by the sum of one more helpless victim; whose miserable appearance may be looked for—in round numbers—at the expiration of a period not exceeding six lunar months from the present date.

“After premising thus much, it would be a work of supererogation to add, that dust and ashes are for ever scattered

“On

“The

“Head

“Of

“WILKINS MICAWBER.”

CHAPTER III.

RARELY did I wake at night, rarely did I look up at the moon or stars or watch the falling rain, or hear the wind, but I thought of the solitary figure of the good fisherman toiling on—poor Pilgrim!—and recalled his words, “I’m a going to seek my niece. I’m a going to seek her fur and wide.”

Months passed, and he had been absent—no one knew where—the whole time. It had been a bitter day, and a cutting north-east wind had blown. The wind had gone down with the light, and snow had come on—a heavy, settled fall in great flakes; and it lay thick. The noise of wheels and tread of people were as hushed, as if the streets had been strewn that depth with feathers.

My shortest way home,—and I naturally took

the shortest way on such a night—was through Saint Martin's Lane. On the steps of the church, there was the stooping figure of a man, who had put down some burden on the smooth snow, to adjust it. I stood face to face with Mr. Peggotty! We shook hands. At first neither of us could speak a word.

"Mas'r Davy! It do my art good to see you, sir. Well met, well met!"

"Well met, my dear old friend!"

"I had thowts o' coming to make inquisition for you, sir, to-night, but it was too late. I should have come early in the morning, sir, afore going away agen."

"Again?"

"Yes, sir," he replied, patiently shaking his head, "I'm away to-morrow."

In those days there was a side entrance to the stable-yard of the Golden Cross. I pointed out the gateway, put my arm through his, and we went in. Two or three public-rooms opened out of the stable-yard; and looking into one of

them, and finding it empty, and a good fire burning, I took him in there.

When I saw him in the light, I observed, not only that his hair was long and ragged, but that his face was burnt dark by the sun. He was grayer, the lines in his face and forehead were deeper, and he had every appearance of having toiled and wandered through all varieties of weather ; but he looked very strong, and like a man upheld by stedfastness of purpose, whom nothing could tire out. He shook the snow from his hat and clothes, and brushed it away from his face. As he sate down opposite to me at a table, with his back to the door by which we had entered, he put out his rough hand again, and grasped mine warmly.

“ I’ll tell you, Mas’r Davy, wheer-all I’ve been, and what-all we’ve heerd. I’ve been fur, and we’ve heerd little ; but I’ll tell you ! ”

I rang the bell for something hot to drink. He would have nothing stronger than ale ; and while it was being brought, and being warmed

at the fire, he sat thinking. There was a fine massive gravity in his face, which I did not venture to disturb.

“When she was a child, she used to talk to me a deal about the sea, and about them coasts where the sea got to be dark blue, and to lay a shining and a shining in the sun. I thowt, odd times, as her father being drown'd, made her think on it so much. I don't know, you see, but maybe she believed—or hoped—he had drifted out to them parts, where the flowers is always a blowing, and the country bright.”

“It is likely to have been a childish fancy.”

“When she was—lost, I know'd in my mind, as he would take her to them countries. I know'd in my mind, as he'd have told her wonders of 'em, and how she was to be a lady theer, and how he first got her to listen to him along o' sech like. I went acroß-channel to France, and landed theer, as if I'd fell down from the skies. I found out a English gentleman, as was in authority, and told him I was going to

seek my niece. He got me them papers as I wanted fur to carry me through—I doesn't rightly know how they're called—and he would have give me money, but that I was thankful to have no need on. I thank him kind, for all he done, I'm sure! I told him, best as I was able, what my gratitooode was, and went away through France, fur to seek my niece."

"Alone, and on foot?"

"Mostly a-foot; sometimes in carts along with people going to market; sometimes in empty coaches. Many mile a day a-foot, and often with some poor soldier or another, travelling fur to see his friends. I couldn't talk to him, nor he to me; but we was company for one another, too, along the dusty roads. When I come to any town, I found the inn, and waited about the yard till some one came by (some one mostly did) as know'd English. Then I told how that I was on my way to seek my niece, and they told me what manner of gentlefolks was in the house, and I waited to see any as seemed like her, going in or

out. When it warn't Em'ly, I went on agen. By little and little, when I come to a new village or that, among the poor people, I found they know'd about me. They would set me down at their cottage doors, and give me what-not fur to eat and drink, and show me where to sleep. And many a woman, Mas'r Davy, as has had a daughter of about Em'ly's age, I've found a-waiting for me, at Our Saviour's Cross outside the village, fur to do me sim'lar kindnesses. Some has had daughters as was dead. And God only knows how good them mothers was to me! They would often put their children—partic'lar their little girls—upon my knee; and many a time you might have seen me sitting at their doors, when night was coming on, a'most as if they'd been my Darling's children. Oh, my Darling!"

I laid my trembling hand upon the hand he put before his face. "Thankee, sir, doesn't take no notice."

"At last I come to the sea. It warn't hard, you may suppose, for a seafaring man like me

to work his way over to Italy. When I got theer, I wandered on as I had done afore. I got news of her being seen among them Swiss mountains yonder. One as know'd his servant see 'em theer, all three, and told me how they travelled, and wheer they was. I made for them mountains, Mas'r Davy, day and night. Ever so fur as I went, ever so fur them mountains seemed to shift away from me. But I come up with 'em, and I crossed 'em. When I got nigh the place as I had been told of, I began to think within my own self, 'What shall I do when I see her?' I never doubted her. No! Not a bit! On'y let her see my face—on'y let her heer my voice—on'y let my stanning still afore her bring to her thoughts the home she had fled away from, and the child she had been—and if she had growed to be a royal lady, she'd have fell down at my feet! I know'd it well! Many a time in my sleep had I heerd her cry out, 'Uncle!' and seen her fall like death afore me. Many a time in my sleep had I raised her up, and whispered to

her, 'Em'ly, my dear, I am come fur to bring forgiveness, and to take you home!' Well! He was nowt to me now. Em'ly was all. I bought a country dress to put upon her To put that dress upon her, and to cast off what she wore—to take her on my arm again, and wander towards home—to stop sometimes upon the road, and heal her bruised feet and her worse-bruised heart—was all I thowt of now. But, Mas'r Davy, it warn't to be—not yet! I was too late, and they was gone. Wheer, I couldn't learn. Some said heer, some said theer. I travelled heer, and I travelled theer, but I found no Em'ly, and I travelled home."

"How long ago?"

"A matter o' fower days. I sighted the old boat arter dark, and the light a shining in the winder. When I come nigh and looked in through the glass, I see the faithful creetur Missis Gummidge a sittin' by the fire, as she and me had fixed upon, alone. I called out, 'Doen't be afeerd! It's Dan'l!' and I went in. I never

could have thowt the old boat would have been so strange!"

From some pocket in his breast, he took out with a very careful hand, a small paper bundle containing two or three letters or little packets, which he laid upon the table.

"This first one come afore I had been gone a week. A fifty pound Bank note, in a sheet of paper, directed to me, and put underneath the door in the night. She tried to hide her writing, but she couldn't hide it from Me! This one come to Missis Gummidge, two or three montha ago. Five pounds."

It was untouched like the previous sum, and he refolded both.

"Is that another letter in your hand?"

"It's money, too, sir. Ten pound, you see. And wrote inside, 'From a true friend.' But the two first was put underneath the door, and this come by the post, day afore yesterday. I'm going to seek her at the post-mark."

He showed it to me. It was a town on the

Upper Rhine. He had found out, at Yarmouth, some foreign dealers who knew that country, and they had drawn him a rude map on paper, which he could very well understand.

I asked him how Ham was? He shook his head.

“He works as bold as a man can. His name’s as good, in all that part, as any man’s is, anywheres in the wureld. Anyone’s hand is ready to help him, you understand, and he is ready to help them. He’s never been heerd fur to complain. But my sister’s belief is (’twixt ourselves) as it has cut him deep. Well! Having seen you to-night, Mas’r Davy (and that doos me good!), I shall away betimes to-morrow morning. You have seen what I’ve got heer;” putting his hand on where the little packet lay; “all that troubles me is, to think that any harm might come to me, afore this money was give back. If I was to die, and it was lost, or stole, or elseways made away with, and it was never know’d by him but what I’d took it, I believe the t’other wureld wouldn’t hold me! I believe I must come back!”

He rose, and I rose too. We grasped each other by the hand again, and as we went out into the rigorous night, everything seemed to be hushed in reverence for him, when he resumed his solitary journey through the snow.

CHAPTER IV.

ALL this time I had gone on loving Dora harder than ever. If I may so express it, I was steeped in Dora. I was not merely over head and ears in love with her; I was saturated through and through. I took night walks to Norwood where she lived, and perambulated round and round the house and garden for hours together; looking through crevices in the palings, using violent exertions to get my chin above the rusty nails on the top, blowing kisses at the lights in the windows, and romantically calling on the night to shield my Dora. I don't exactly know from what—I suppose from fire—perhaps from mice, to which she had a great objection.

Dora had a friend, comparatively stricken in years; almost of the ripe age of twenty, I should

say. Her name was Miss Mills, and Dora called her Julia. She was the bosom friend of Dora. Happy Miss Mills !

One day Miss Mills said, "Dora is coming to stay with me. She is coming the day after to-morrow. If you would like to call, I am sure papa would be happy to see you." What could I do but invoke a silent blessing on Miss Mills's head, and store Miss Mills's address in the securest corner of my memory ?

I passed three days in a luxury of wretchedness, torturing myself by putting every conceivable variety of discouraging construction on all that had ever taken place between Dora and me. At last, arrayed for the purpose at a vast expense, I went to Miss Mills's fraught with a declaration.

Mr. Mills was not at home. I didn't expect he would be. Nobody wanted *him*. Miss Mills was at home. Miss Mills would do.

I was shown into a room up-stairs, where Miss Mills and Dora were. Dora's little dog Jip was there. Miss Mills was copying music, and Dora

was painting flowers. What were my feelings when I recognized flowers I had given her! I cannot say that they were very like, or that they particularly resembled any flowers that have ever come under my observation.

Miss Mills was very glad to see me, and very sorry her papa was not at home: though I thought we all bore that with fortitude. Miss Mills was conversational for a few minutes, and then, laying down her pen, got up and left the room.

I began to think I would put it off till to-morrow.

"I hope your poor horse was not tired, when he got home at night from that pic-nic," said Dora, lifting up her beautiful eyes. "It was a long way for him."

I began to think I would do it to-day.

"It was a long way for *him*, for *he* had nothing to uphold him on the journey."

"Wasn't he fed, poor thing?" asked Dora.

I began to think I would put it off till to-morrow.

"Ye—yes, he was well taken care of. I mean he had not the unutterable happiness that I had in being so near you."

Dora bent her head over her drawing, and said, after a little while—I had sat, in the interval, in a burning fever, and with my legs in a very rigid state—

"You didn't seem to be sensible of that happiness yourself, at one time of the day."

I saw now that I was in for it, and it must be done on the spot.

"You didn't care for that happiness in the least," said Dora, slightly raising her eyebrows, and shaking her head, "when you were sitting by Miss Kitt."

Kitt I should observe, was the name of a feminine creature in pink, with little eyes, with whom I had flirted at the pic-nic in madness and despair.

"Though certainly I don't know why you should care for being near me," said Dora, "or why you should call it a happiness at all. But of

course you don't mean what you say. And I am sure no one doubts your being at liberty to do whatever you like. Jip, you naughty boy, come here ! ”

I don't know how I did it. I did it in a moment. I intercepted Jip. I had Dora in my arms. I was full of eloquence. I never stopped for a word. I told her how I loved her. I told her I should die without her. I told her that I idolized and worshipped her. Jip barked madly all the time.

When Dora hung her head and cried and trembled, my eloquence increased so much the more. I said, if she would like me to die for her, she had but to say the word, and I was ready. Life without Dora's love was not a thing to have on any terms. I couldn't bear it, and I wouldn't. I had loved her every minute, day and night, since I first saw her. I loved her at that minute to distraction. I should always love her, every minute, to distraction. Lovers had loved before, and lovers would love again ; but no lover had

ever loved, might, could, would, or should, ever love, as I loved Dora. The more I raved, the more Jip barked. Each of us, in his own way, got more mad every moment.

Well, well ! Dora and I were sitting on the sofa by-and-by, quiet enough, and Jip was lying in her lap, winking peacefully at me. It was off my mind. I was in a state of perfect rapture. Dora and I were engaged.

Being poor, I felt it necessary the next time I went to my darling, to expatiate on that unfortunate drawback. I soon carried desolation into the bosom of our joys—not that I meant to do it, but that I was so full of the subject—by asking Dora, without the smallest preparation, if she could love a beggar ?

My pretty, little, startled Dora ! Her only association with the word was a yellow face and a nightcap, or a pair of crutches, or a wooden leg, or a dog with a decanter-stand in his mouth, or something of that kind ; and she stared at me with the most delightful wonder.

"How can you ask me anything so foolish? Love a beggar!"

"Dora, my own dearest! I am a beggar!"

"How can you be such a silly thing," replied Dora, slapping my hand, "as to sit there, telling such stories? I'll make Jip bite you!"

"Dora, my own life, I am your ruined David!"

"I declare I'll make Jip bite you!" said Dora, shaking her curls, "if you are so ridiculous."

But I looked so serious, that Dora left off shaking her curls, and laid her trembling little hand upon my shoulder, and first looked scared and anxious, then began to cry. That was dreadful. For some time, poor little Dora did nothing but exclaim Oh dear! Oh dear! And oh, she was so frightened! And where was Julia Mills! And oh, take her to Julia Mills, and go away, please! until I was almost beside myself.

I thought I had killed her. I sprinkled water on her face. I went down on my knees. I plucked at my hair. I denounced myself as a remorseless brute, and beast. I implored her for-

giveness. I besought her to look up. I ravaged Miss Mills's work-box for a smelling-bottle, and in my agony of mind applied an ivory needle-case instead, and dropped all the needles over Dora. I shook my fists at Jip, who was as frantic as myself. I did every wild extravagance that could be done.

At last, after an agony of supplication, I got Dora to look at me, with a horrified expression of face, which I gradually soothed until it was only loving, and her soft, pretty cheek was lying against mine.

"Is your heart mine still, dear Dora?" said I, rapturously, for I knew by her clinging to me that it was.

"Oh, yes!" cried Dora. "Oh, yes, it's all yours. Oh, don't be dreadful!"

I dreadful. To Dora!

"Don't talk about being poor, and working hard! Oh, don't, don't!"

"My dearest love, the crust well-earned—"

"Oh, yes; but I don't want to hear any more

about crusts ! And Jip must have a mutton-chop every day at twelve, or he'll die ! ”

I was charmed with her childish, winning way and I fondly explained to her that Jip should have his mutton-chop with his accustomed regularity.

One thing troubled me, though, after we had fallen into a quiet train and were in a fair way to be married. It was, that Dora seemed by one consent to be regarded like a pretty toy or plaything. It was very odd to me ; but they all seemed to treat Dora, in her degree, much as Dora treated Jip in his.

I made up my mind to speak to Dora about this ; and one day, I said to her that I wished she could get them to behave towards her differently.

“ Because you know, my darling, you are not a child.”

“ There ! Now you're going to be cross ! ”

“ Cross, my love ? ”

“ I am sure they're very kind to me, and I am very happy.”

“ Well ! But my dearest life, you might be very happy, and yet be treated rationally.”

Dora gave me a reproachful look—the prettiest look!—and then began to sob, saying if I didn’t like her, why had I ever wanted so much to be engaged to her ? And why didn’t I go away now, if I couldn’t bear her ?

What could I do but kiss away her tears, and tell her how I doted on her, after that !

I was charmed by her presently asking me, of her own accord, to give her that cookery-book I had once spoken of, and to show her how to keep accounts, as I had once promised I would. I brought the volume with me on my next visit (I got it prettily bound, first, to make it look less dry and more inviting) ; and showed her an old house-keeping-book of my aunt’s, and gave her a set of tablets, and a pretty little pencil-case, and a box of leads, to practise house-keeping with.

But the cookery-book made Dora’s head ache, and the figures made her cry. They wouldn’t add up, she said. So she rubbed them out, and drew

little nosegays, and likenesses of me and Jip, all over the tablets.

Then I playfully tried verbal instruction in domestic matters. Sometimes, for example, when we passed a butcher's shop, I would say :

"Now suppose, my pet, that we were married, and you were going to buy a shoulder of mutton for dinner, would you know how to buy it?"

My pretty little Dora's face would fall, and she would make her mouth into a rosebud, as if she would very much prefer to shut mine with a kiss.

"Would you know how to buy it, my darling?" I would repeat, if I were very inflexible.

Dora would think a little, and would then reply with great triumph :

"Why, the butcher would know how to sell it, and what need *I* know? Oh, you silly boy!"

So, when I once asked Dora, with an eye to the cookery-book, what she would do, if we were married, and I were to say I should like a nice Irish stew, she replied that she would tell the

servant to make it; and then clapped her little hands together across my arm, and laughed in such a charming manner that she was more delightful than ever.

Time went on, and at last, here in this hand of mine I held the wedding licence. There were the two names in the sweet old visionary connexion, David Copperfield and Dora Spenlow; and there in the corner was that parental Institution the Stamp-office, looking down upon our union; and there, in the printed form of words, was the Archbishop of Canterbury invoking a blessing on us, and doing it as cheap as could possibly be expected!

I doubt whether two young birds could have known less about keeping house, than I and my pretty Dora did. We had a servant, of course. She kept house for us. We had an awful time of it with Mary Anne.

Her name was Paragon. Her nature was represented to us, when we engaged her, as being feebly expressed in her name. She had a written

character, as large as a Proclamation ; and, according to this document, could do everything of a domestic nature that ever I heard of, and a great many things that I never did hear of. She was a woman in the prime of life ; of a severe countenance ; and subject (particularly in the arms) to a sort of perpetual measles. She had a cousin in the Life Guards, with such long legs that he looked like the afternoon shadow of somebody else. She was warranted sober and honest. I am therefore willing to believe that she was in a fit when we found her under the boiler ; and that the deficient teaspoons were attributable to the dustman. She was the cause of our first little quarrel.

“My dearest life,” I said one day to Dora, “do you think Mary Anne has any idea of time?”

“Why, Doady?” inquired Dora, looking up from her drawing.

“My love, because it’s five, and we were to have dined at four.”

Dora glanced at the clock, and hinted that she thought it was too fast.

“On the contrary, my love, it’s a few minutes too slow.”

My little wife came and sat upon my knee, to coax me to be quiet, and drew a line with her pencil down the middle of my nose; but I couldn’t dine off that, though it was very agreeable.

“Don’t you think, my dear, it would be better for you to remonstrate with Mary Anne?”

“Oh no, please! I couldn’t, Doady!”

“Why not, my love?”

“Oh, because I am such a little goose, and she knows I am!”

I thought this sentiment so incompatible with the establishment of any system of check on Mary Anne, that I frowned a little.

“Oh, what ugly wrinkles in my bad boy’s forehead!” said Dora, and still being on my knee, she traced them with her pencil; putting it to her rosy lips to make it mark blacker, and working

at my forehead with a quaint little mockery of being industrious, that quite delighted me in spite of myself.

"There's a good child," said Dora, "it makes its face so much prettier to laugh."

"But my love," said I.

"No, no! please!" cried Dora, with a kiss, "don't be a naughty Blue Beard! Don't be serious!"

"My precious wife," said I, "we must be serious sometimes. Come! Sit down on this chair, close beside me! Give me the pencil! There! Now let us talk sensibly. You know, dear;" what a little hand it was to hold, and what a tiny wedding-ring it was to see! "You know, my love, it is not exactly comfortable to have to go out without one's dinner. Now, is it?"

"N—n—no!" replied Dora, faintly.

"My love, how you tremble!"

"Because I know you're going to scold me," exclaimed Dora, in a piteous voice.

"My sweet, I am only going to reason."

“Oh, but reasoning is worse than scolding ! I didn’t marry to be reasoned with. If you meant to reason with such a poor little thing as I am, you ought to have told me so, you cruel boy !”

I tried to pacify Dora, but she turned away her face, and shook her curls from side to side, and said, “You cruel, cruel boy !” so many times, that I really did not exactly know what to do. So I took a few turns up and down the room in my uncertainty, and came back again.

“Dora, my darling !”

“No, I am not your darling. Because you *must* be sorry that you married me, or else you wouldn’t reason with me !” returned Dora.

I felt so injured by the inconsequential nature of this charge, that it gave me courage to be grave.

“Now, my own Dora, you are very childish, and are talking nonsense. You must remember, I am sure, that I was obliged to go out yesterday when dinner was half over ; and that, the day before, I was made quite unwell by being obliged

to eat underdone veal in a hurry ; to-day, I don't dine at all—and I am afraid to say how long we waited for breakfast—and *then* the water didn't boil. I don't mean to reproach you, my dear, but this is not comfortable."

"Oh, you cruel, cruel boy, to say I am a disagreeable wife!"

"Now, my dear Dora, you must know that I never said that!"

"You said I wasn't comfortable!"

"I said the house-keeping was not comfortable."

"It's exactly the same thing! and I wonder, I do, at your making such ungrateful speeches. When you know that the other day, when you said you would like a little bit of fish, I went out myself, miles and miles, and ordered it, to surprise you."

"And it was very kind of you, my own darling; and I felt it so much that I wouldn't on any account have mentioned that you bought a salmon—which was too much for two. Or that it cost one pound six—which was more than we can afford."

“You enjoyed it very much,” sobbed Dora.
“And you said I was a mouse.”

“And I’ll say so again, my love, a thousand times !”

I said it a thousand times, and more, and went on saying it until Mary Anne’s cousin deserted into our coal-hole, and was brought out, to our great amazement, by a piquet of his companions in arms, who took him away handcuffed, in a procession that covered our front-garden with disgrace. This nerved me to get rid of Mary Anne ; and after an interval of Mrs. Kidgerbury—the oldest inhabitant of Kentish Town, who went out charing, but was too feeble to execute her conceptions of that art—we found another treasure, who was one of the most amiable of women, but who generally made a point of falling either up or down the kitchen stairs with the tray. The ravages committed by this unfortunate, rendering her dismissal necessary, she was succeeded (with intervals of Mrs. Kidgerbury) by a long line of Incapables ; terminating in a young person of

genteel appearance, who went to Greenwich Fair in Dora's bonnet.

Everybody we had anything to do with, seemed to cheat us. Our appearance in a shop was a signal for the damaged goods to be brought out immediately. If we bought a lobster, it was full of water. All our meat turned out tough, and there was hardly any crust to our loaves. In search of the principle on which joints ought to be roasted, to be roasted enough and not too much, I myself referred to the Cookery-Book, and found it there established as the allowance of a quarter of an hour to every pound, and say a quarter over. But the principle always failed us.

As to the washerwoman pawning the clothes, and coming in a state of penitent intoxication to apologize, I suppose that might have happened several times to anybody. Also the chimney on fire, the parish engine, and perjury on the part of the Beadle. But I apprehend we were personally unfortunate in engaging a servant with a taste for cordials, who swelled our running account

for porter at the public-house by such inexplicable items as “quartern rum shrub (Mrs. C.)” “Half quartern gin and cloves (Mrs. C.)” “Glass rum and peppermint (Mrs. C.)”—the parenthesis always referring to Dora, who was supposed, it appeared on explanation, to have imbibed the whole of these refreshments.

Then, we kept a page. The principal function of this retainer was to quarrel with the cook ; in which respect he was a perfect Whittington, without his cat, or the remotest chance of being made Lord Mayor. He lived in a hail of saucepan-lids. He would shriek for help on the most improper occasions—as when we had a little dinner or a few friends in the evening—and would come tumbling out of the kitchen, with iron missiles flying after him. We wanted to get rid of him, but he was very much attached to us, and wouldn't go, until one day he stole Dora's watch, and spent the produce (he was always a weak-minded boy) in incessantly riding up and down between London and Uxbridge outside the coach.

He was taken to Bow Street, as well as I remember, on the completion of his fifteenth journey ; when four-and-sixpence, and a second-hand fife which he couldn't play, were found upon his person.

He was tried and ordered to be transported. Even then he couldn't be quiet, but was always writing us letters ; and he wanted so much to see Dora before he went away, that Dora went to visit him, and fainted when she found herself inside the iron bars. I had no peace of my life until he was expatriated, and made (as I afterwards heard) a shepherd of, "up the country" somewhere ; I have no geographical idea where.

"I am very sorry for all this, Doady," said Dora. "Will you call me a name I want you to call me ?"

"What is it, my dear ?"

"It's a stupid name—Child-wife. When you are going to be angry with me, say to yourself 'it's only my Child-wife.' When I am very disappointing, say, 'I knew, a long time ago, that

she would make but a Child-wife.' When you miss what you would like me to be, and what I should like to be, and what I think I never can be, say, 'Still my foolish Child-wife loves me.' For indeed I do."

Her hands were clasped upon my shoulder, and her chin rested on them, and her eyes looked quietly into mine. I invoke the innocent figure that I dearly loved, to come out of the mists and shadows of the Past, and to turn its gentle head towards me once again, and to bear witness that it was made happy by what I answered.

CHAPTER V.

I HEARD a footstep on the stairs one day. I knew it to be Mr. Peggotty's. It came nearer, nearer rushed into the room.

“Mas'r Davy, I've found her! I lay my dear child last night in my lodging here in Lunnon. I thank my Heavenly Father for having guided of me in His own ways to my darling!”

As he raised his sinewy hand to Heaven, I could not help observing what power and force of character it expressed.

“When my Em'ly found out as she was deceived, and when she took flight from the house in foreign parts wheer she was made a pris'nér by that theer spotted snake, she took flight in the night. It was a dark night, with a many stars a shining She was wild. She ran along the sea beach,

believing the old boat was theer ; and calling out to us to turn away our faces, for she was a coming by. Ever so fur she run, and there was fire afore her eyes and roarings in her ears. Of a sudden—or so she thowt, you unnerstand—the day broke, wet and windy, and she was lying b'low a heap of stone upon the shore, and a woman was speaking to her, saying, in the language of that country, what was it as had gone so much amiss ? ”

He saw everything he related. It passed before him, as he spoke, vividly.

“ As Em'ly's eyes—which was heavy—see this woman better, she know'd as she was one of them as she had often talked to on the beach. Fur, though she had run (as I have said) ever so fur in the night, she had oftentimes wandered long ways partly afoot, partly in boats and carriages, and know'd all that country, 'long the coast, miles and miles. She hadn't no children of her own, this woman, being a young wife ; but she was a looking to have one afore long. And may my prayers go up to Heaven that 'twill be a happ'ness

to her, and a comfort, and a honour, all her life! May it love her and be dootiful to her in her old age; helpful of her at the last; a Angel to her heer, and heerafter! Em'ly told her, and she—took her home.

He was more affected by this act of kindness, than I had ever seen him affected by anything since the night she went away.

“It was a little cottage, you may suppose, but she found space for Em'ly in it,—her husband was away at sea,—and she kep it secret, and prevailed upon such neighbours as she had (theer was not many near) to keep it secret too. Em'ly was took bad with fever, and what is very strange to me is,—maybe 'tis not so strange to scholars,—the language of that country went out of her head, and she could only speak her own, that no one unnerstood. She recollects, as if she had dreamed it, that she lay there, always a talking her own tongue, always believing as the old boat was round the next pint in the bay, and begging and imploring of 'em to send theer and tell how

she was dying, and bring back a message of forgiveness, if it was on'y a wured. How long this lasted, I doen't know ; but then there come a sleep ; and in that sleep, from being a many times stronger than her own self, she fell into the weakness of the littlest child."

Here he stopped, as if for relief from the terrors of his own description.

" It was a pleasant arternoon when she awoke ; and so quiet, that there warn't a sound but the rippling of that blue sea without a tide, upon the shore. It was her belief, at first, that she was at home upon a Sunday morning ; but, the vine leaves as she see at the winder, and the hills beyond, warn't home, and contradicted of her. Then, come in her friend, to watch a'longside of her bed ; and then she know'd as the old boat warn't round that next pint in the bay no more but was fur off ; and know'd where she was, and why ; and broke out a crying on that good young woman's bosom ! "

He could not speak of this good friend of

Emily's. It was in vain to try. He broke down again, endeavouring to bless her !

"That done my Em'ly good, and she begun to mend. But, the language of that country was quite gone from her, and she was forced to make signs. So she went on, getting better from day to day, slow, but sure, and trying to learn the names of common things—names as she seemed never to have heered in all her life—till one evening come, when she was a setting at her window, looking at a little girl at play upon the beach. And of a sudden this child held out her hand, and said, what would be in English, 'Fisherman's daughter, here's a shell!'—for you are to unnerstand that they used at first to call her 'Pretty lady,' as the general way in that country is, and that she had taught 'em to call her 'Fisherman's daughter' instead. The child says of a sudden, 'Fisherman's daughter, here's a shell!'" Then Em'ly unnerstands her; and she answers, bursting out a crying; and it all comes back !

"When Em'ly got strong again, she cast about

to leave that good young creetur, and get to her own country. The husband was come home, then ; and the two together put her aboard a small trader bound to Leghorn, and from that to France. She had a little money ; but it was less than little as they would take for all they done. I'm a'most glad on it, though they was so poor ! What they done is laid up wheer neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and wheer thieves do not break through nor steal. Mas'r Davy, it'll outlast all the treasure in the wureld.

“ Em'ly got to France, and took service to wait on travelling ladies at a inn in the port. Theer, theer come, one day, that snake.—Let him never come nigh me. I doen't know what hurt I might do him !—Soon as she see him, without him seeing her, all her fear and wildness returned upon her, and she fled afore the very breath he draw'd. She come to England, and was set ashore at Dover.

“ I doen't know for sure, when her art begun to fail her ; but all the way to England she had thowt to come right straight to her dear home.

Soon as she got to England she turned her face tow'rds it. But, fear of not being forgiv, fear of being pinte'd at, fear of some of us being dead along of her, fear of many things, turned her from it, kiender by force, upon the road: 'Uncle, uncle,' she says to me last night, 'I turned back, when my art was full of prayers that I might crawl to the old doorstep, in the night, kiss it, lay my wicked face upon it, and theer be found dead in the morning.'

"She come to London. She—as had never seen it in her life—alone—without a penny—young—so pretty—come to London. A'most the moment as she lighted heer, all so desolate, she found (as she believed) a friend, a decent woman as spoke to her about the needle-work as she had been brought up to do, about finding plenty of it fur her, about a lodging for the night, and making secret inquisition concerning of me and all at home, to-morrow. When my child stood upon the brink of more than I can say or think on—I found and saved her!"

I could not repress a cry of joy.

"Mas'r Davy!" he said, gripping my hand in that strong hand of his, "I know'd of bitter knowledge wheer to watch and what to do. And the Lord was above all! I come upon Em'ly in her sleep. Them belonging to the house would have stopped me, but they might as soon have stopped the sea. 'Stand away from me,' I says, 'I call her from beside her open grave!' My Em'ly swooned away. I wrapped her, hasty, in her clothes. I took her in my arms. I kissed her face. I laid it heer, and hid it with a hankercher. I brought her safe out, in the dead of the night, from that black pit of ruin! All night long, we have been together, Em'ly and me. All night long, her arms has been about my neck, and her head has laid heer; and we knows full well, as we can put our trust in one another evermore."

He ceased to speak, and his hand upon the table rested there in perfect repose, with a resolution in it that might have conquered lions.

"You have made up your mind as to the future, good friend ? "

" Yes, Mas'r Davy, theer's mighty countries, fur from heer. Our future life lays over the sea."

As he gave me both his hands, hurrying to return to the one charge of his noble existence, I thought of Ham. Who would break the intelligence to him ? Mr. Peggotty thought of everything. He had already written to the poor fellow, and had the letter in the pocket of his rough coat, ready for the post. I asked him for it, and said I would go down to Yarmouth, and talk to Ham myself before I gave it him, and prepare him for its contents. He thanked me very earnestly, and we parted, with the understanding that I would go down by the Mail that same night. In the evening I started.

" Don't you think that," I asked the coachman, in the first stage out of London, " a very remarkable sky ? I don't remember to have ever seen one like it."

“Nor I. That’s wind, sir. There’ll be mischief done at sea before long.”

It was a murky confusion—here and there blotted with a colour like the colour of the smoke from damp fuel—of flying clouds tossed up into most remarkable heaps, suggesting greater heights in the clouds than there are depths below them to the bottom of the deepest hollows in the earth : through which the wild moon seemed to plunge headlong, as if, in a dread disturbance of the laws of nature, she had lost her way. There had been a wind all day ; and it was rising then, with an extraordinary great sound. In another hour it had much increased, and the sky was more overcast, and it blew hard.

But, as the night advanced, the clouds closing in and densely overspreading the whole sky then very dark, it came on to blow, harder and harder. It still increased, until our horses could scarcely face the wind. Many times, in the dark part of the night (it was then late in September, when the nights were not short), the leaders turned

about, or came to a dead stop; and we were often in serious apprehension that the coach would be blown over. Sweeping gusts of rain came up before this storm, like showers of steel; and at those times, when there was any shelter of trees or lee walls to be got, we were fain to stop, in a sheer impossibility of continuing the struggle.

When the day broke, the wind blew harder and harder. I had been in Yarmouth when the seamen said it blew great guns, but I had never known the like of this, or anything approaching to it. We came to Ipswich—very late, having had to fight every inch of ground since we were ten miles out of London; and found a cluster of people in the market-place, who had risen from their beds in the night, fearful of falling chimneys. Some of these told us of great sheets of lead having been ripped off a high church-tower, and flung into a bye-street. Others had to tell of country people, coming in from neighbouring villages, who had seen great trees lying torn out

of the earth, and whole ricks scattered about the roads and fields. Still, there was no abatement in the storm, but it blew harder.

As we struggled on, nearer and nearer to the sea, from which this mighty wind was blowing dead on shore, its force became more and more terrific. When we came within sight of the sea, the waves on the horizon, caught at intervals above the rolling abyss, were like glimpses of another shore with towers and buildings. When at last we got into the town, the people came out to their doors, all aslant and with streaming hair, making a wonder of the mail that had come through such a night.

The tremendous sea itself, when I could find sufficient pause to look at it, in the agitation of the blinding wind, the flying stones and sand, and the awful noise, confounded me. As the high watery walls came rolling in, and tumbled into surf, they looked as if the least would engulf the town. As the receding wave swept back with a hoarse roar, it seemed to scoop out deep caves in

the beach. When some white-headed billows thundered on, and dashed themselves to pieces before they reached the land, every fragment of the late whole seemed possessed by the full might of its wrath, rushing to be gathered to the composition of another monster. Undulating hills were changed to valleys ; undulating valleys were lifted up to hills ; masses of water shivered and shook the beach with a booming sound ; every shape rolled on, as soon as made, to change its shape and place, and beat another shape and place away ; the ideal shore on the horizon with its towers and buildings, rose and fell ; the clouds flew fast and thick ; I seemed to see a rending and upheaving of all nature.

Not finding Ham among the people whom this memorable wind—for it is still remembered down there as the greatest ever known to blow upon that coast—had brought together on the beach, I made my way to his house. It was shut ; and as no one answered to my knocking, I went by back ways and by-lanes to the yard where he worked.

I learned, there, that he had gone some miles away, to meet a sudden exigency of ship-repairing in which his skill was required ; but that he would be back to-morrow morning in good time.

I went back to the inn ; and when I had washed and dressed, and tried to sleep, but in vain, it was five o'clock in the afternoon. I had not sat five minutes by the coffee-room fire, when the waiter coming to stir it, as an excuse for talking, told me that two colliers had gone down, with all hands, a few miles off ; and that some other ships had been seen labouring hard in the Roads, and trying, in great distress, to keep off shore. Mercy on them, and on all poor sailors, said he, if we had another night like the last !

I could not eat, I could not sit still, I could not continue steadfast to anything. Something within me, faintly answering to the storm without, tossed up the depths of my memory, wild running with the thundering sea. My dinner went away almost untasted, and I tried to refresh myself with a

glass or two of wine. In vain. I walked to and fro, tried to read an old gazetteer, listened to the awful noises: looked at faces, scenes, and figures in the fire. At length, the steady ticking of the undisturbed clock on the wall, tormented me to that degree that I resolved to go to bed.

For hours I lay there, listening to the wind and water; imagining, now, that I heard shrieks out at sea; now, that I distinctly heard the firing of signal guns; now, the fall of houses in the town. At length, my restlessness attained to such a pitch, that I hurried on my clothes, and went down-stairs. In the large kitchen, all the inn servants and some other watchers were clustered together, about a table, purposely moved away from the great chimney. One man, referring to the topic they had been discussing, asked me whether I thought the souls of the collier-crews who had gone down, were out in the storm?

I remained there, I dare say, two hours. Once, I opened the yard-gate, and looked into the empty

street. The sand, the sea-weed, and the flakes of foam, were driving by, and I was obliged to call for assistance before I could shut the gate again, and make it fast against the wind.

There was a dark gloom in my lonely chamber, when I at length returned to it ; but I was tired now, and, getting into bed again, fell—off a tower and down a precipice—into the depths of sleep. I dreamed of being engaged with two dear friends—but who they were I don't know—at the siege of some town in a roar of cannonading.

The thunder of the cannon was so loud and incessant, that I could not hear something I much desired to hear, until I made a great exertion, and awoke. It was broad day—eight or nine o'clock ; the storm was raging, in lieu of the batteries ; and some one was knocking and calling at my door.

“ What is the matter ? ”

“ A wreck ! Close by ! ”

“ What wreck ? ”

“ A schooner, from Spain or Portugal, laden

with fruit and wine. Make haste, sir, if you want to see her! It's thought, down on the beach, she'll go to pieces every moment."

I wrapped myself in my clothes as quickly as I could, and ran into the street. Numbers of people were there before me, all running in one direction, to the beach. I ran the same way, outstripping a good many, and soon came facing the wild sea. Every appearance it had before presented, bore the expression of being *swelled*; and the height to which the breakers rose, and bore one another down, and rolled in, in interminable hosts, was most appalling.

In the difficulty of hearing anything but wind and waves, and in the crowd, and the unspeakable confusion, and my first breathless efforts to stand against the weather, I was so confused that I looked out to sea for the wreck, and saw nothing but the foaming heads of the great waves. A half-dressed boatman, standing next me, pointed to the left. Then, O great Heaven, I saw it, close in upon us!

One mast was broken short off, six or eight feet from the deck, and lay over the side, entangled in a maze of sail and rigging; and all that ruin, as the ship rolled and beat—which she did without a moment's pause, and with a violence quite inconceivable—beat the side as if it would stave it in. Some efforts were being made, to cut this portion of the wreck away; for, as the ship, which was broadside on, turned towards us in her rolling, I plainly descried her people at work with axes—especially one active figure with long curling hair. But, a great cry, which was audible even above the wind and water, rose from the shore at this moment; the sea, sweeping over the rolling wreck, made a clean breach, and carried men, spars, casks, planks, bulwarks, heaps of such toys, into the boiling surge.

The second mast was yet standing, with the rags of a rent sail, and a wild confusion of broken cordage flapping to and fro. The ship had struck once, the same boatman hoarsely said in my ear,

and then lifted in and struck again. I understood him to add that she was parting amidships, and I could readily suppose so, for the rolling and beating were too tremendous for any human work to suffer long. As he spoke, there was another great cry of pity from the beach. Four men arose with the wreck out of the deep, clinging to the rigging of the remaining mast; uppermost, the active figure with the curling hair.

There was a bell on board; and as the ship rolled and dashed, like a desperate creature driven mad, now showing us the whole sweep of her deck, as she turned on her beam-ends towards the shore, now nothing but her keel as she sprung wildly over and turned towards the sea, this bell rang; and its sound, the knell of those unhappy men, was borne towards us on the wind. Again we lost her, and again she rose. Two men were gone. The agony on shore increased. Men groaned, and clasped their hands; women shrieked, and turned away their faces. Some ran wildly up and down, crying for help

where no help could be. I found myself one of these, frantically imploring a knot of sailors whom I knew, not to let those two lost creatures perish before our eyes.

They were making out to me, in an agitated way—I don't know how, for the little I could hear I was scarcely composed enough to understand—that the life-boat had been bravely manned an hour ago, and could do nothing; and that as no man would be so desperate as to attempt to wade off with a rope, and establish a communication with the shore, there was nothing left to try; when I noticed that some new sensation moved the people on the beach, and saw them part, and Ham come breaking through them to the front.

I ran to him. I held him back with both arms; and implored the men with whom I had been speaking, not to listen to him, not to let him stir from off that sand!

Another cry arose on shore; and looking to the wreck, we saw the cruel sail, with blow on

blow, beat off the lower of the two men, and fly up in triumph round the active figure left alone upon the mast.

Against such a sight, and against such determination as that of the calmly desperate man who was already accustomed to lead half the people present, I might as hopefully have entreated the wind. "Mas'r Davy," he said, cheerily grasping me by both hands, "if my time is come, 'tis come. If 't a'nt, I'll bide it. Lord above bless you, and bless all! Mates, make me ready! I'm a going off!"

I was swept away to some distance, where the people around me made me stay; urging, as I confusedly perceived, that he was bent on going, with help or without, and that I should endanger the precautions for his safety by troubling those with whom they rested. I saw hurry on the beach, and men running with ropes from a capstan that was there, and penetrating into a circle of figures that hid him from me. Then, I saw him standing alone, in a seaman's frock and

trowsers: a rope in his hand, or slung to his wrist: another round his body: and several of the best men holding to the latter, which he laid out himself, slack upon the shore, at his feet.

The wreck, even to my unpractised eye, was breaking up. I saw that she was parting in the middle, and that the life of the solitary man upon the mast hung by a thread. Still, he clung to it. He had a singular red cap on,—not like a sailor's cap, but of a finer colour; and as the few yielding planks between him and destruction rolled and bulged, and as his anticipative death-knell rung, he was seen by all of us to wave it. I saw him do it now, and thought I was going distracted, when his action brought an old remembrance to my mind of a once dear friend—the once dear friend—Steerforth.

Ham watched the sea, with the silence of suspended breath behind him, and the storm before, until there was a great retiring wave; when he dashed in after it, and in a moment was

buffeting with the water, rising with the hills, falling with the valleys, lost beneath the foam ; then he was drawn again to land.

He was hurt. I saw blood on his face, from where I stood ; but he took no thought of that. He seemed to give them some directions for leaving him more free—or so I judged from the motion of his arm—and was gone as before.

And now he made for the wreck, rising with the hills, falling with the valleys, lost beneath the foam, borne in towards the shore, borne on towards the ship. The distance was nothing, but the power of the sea and wind made the strife deadly. At length he neared the wreck. He was so near, that with one more of his vigorous strokes he would be clinging to it,—when, a high green vast hill-side of water, moving on shoreward, from beyond the ship, he seemed to leap up into it with a mighty bound—and the ship was gone ! •

Some eddying fragments I saw in the sea, as if a mere cask had been broken in. Consterna-

tion was in every face. They drew him to my very feet—insensible—dead. He was carried to the nearest house; and I remained near him, busy, while every means of restoration were tried; but he had been beaten to death by the great wave, and his generous heart was stilled for ever.

As I sat beside the bed, when hope was abandoned and all was done, a fisherman, who had known me when Emily and I were children, and ever since, whispered my name at the door.

“Sir, will you come over yonder?”

The old remembrance that had been recalled to me, was in his look. I asked him, leaning on the arm he held out to support me:

“Has a body come ashore?”

“Yes.”

“Do I know it?”

He answered nothing. But, he led me to the shore. And on that part of it where she and I had looked for shells, two children—on that part of it where some lighter fragments of the old boat,

blown down last night, had been scattered by the wind—among the ruins of the home he had wronged—I saw him lying with his head upon his arm, as I had often seen him lie at school.

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